



Steve Troxler
Commissioner

**North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services**
Division of Marketing

Tom Slade
Director

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Water Analysis Cost Share program

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) is pleased to announce the creation of the Water Analysis Cost Share program. The purpose of this program is to encourage water testing as part of a pre- and post-harvest food safety program for fruit and vegetable crops. The program will assist in paying for the cost of testing irrigation and/or packing house wash water. The NCDA&CS will reimburse growers up to \$200.00 for laboratory analysis to determine the quantitative presence of generic *E. coli* bacteria in irrigation or wash water by a certified laboratory.

Affecting an estimated 76 million Americans annually, food safety is an important aspect of agricultural operations. Recent outbreaks of *Salmonella* and *E. Coli* have brought attention to safety programs throughout the country and increased consumer awareness of this issue.

Safe inputs, including irrigation and wash water are an important part of any food safety program. Growers and packers are encouraged to have their water tested for generic *E. coli* as this test can provide indication of contamination with pathogens. Results from these tests can aid in tailoring a detailed and reliable food safety program for the farm/packing facility.

Funding for this program is from a USDA specialty crop block grant and is available on a first-come, first-serve basis. **To participate in this program, fill out the attached application form and send to the address on the form.** If your application is approved, you will be notified and be required to submit a reimbursement form along with receipts as proof that you have paid for the tests.

A listing of certified commercial laboratories that test water samples is available from the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Water Quality website: <http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/lab/CertifiedLaboratoryLists.htm> or by telephone at 919.733.3908.

Growers can be reimbursed for one water test or multiple tests throughout the year. For multiple tests please have individual receipts for each test and turn in only **one** inclusive reimbursement form for all testing throughout the growing season.

For additional information or to request an application for this program, contact Kevin Hardison at 919-733-7887 ext 234, or email at Kevin.Hardison@ncagr.gov.

